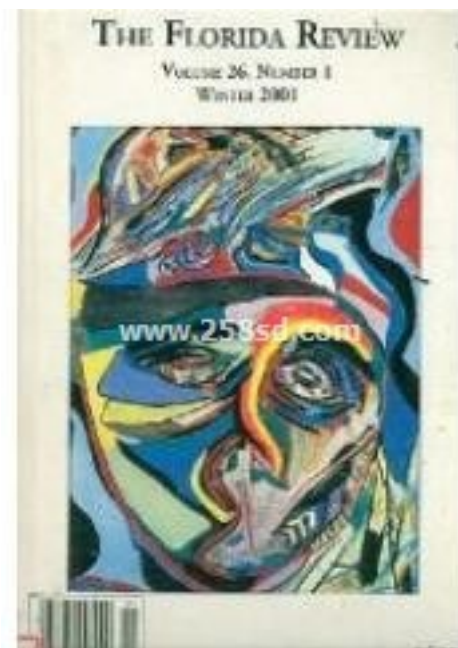


The Florida Review



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The Rural Mail Carrier was weeping when he hit the boy. There were other factors. Blaze of eastern sun on the dusty wind shield loud music--Rod Stewart's "Maggie May"--bundles of mail crowding him against the door. A shadow and a bump. A shadow in a bump and the boy flew across the ditch and snagged the torn paper in the drooping barbed wire. Birds exploded from the tall weeds along the fence. They found some things around the dead boy. A school copy of Jack London's The Call of the Wild a plastic bag of mushy ground beef a cheap pocketknife featuring a spoon and fork. The tool was so old that when a deputy examined it while waiting for the coroner to arrive one of the fork's tines fell off. The metal was fatigued. The deputy glanced around refolded the knife and walked over to stand by

the other deputy who was smoking a cigarette and looking at the Jack London. "I can't believe it. This was one of my favorite books in junior high." "Hmm." "You ever read Jack London?" "No. I wish they'd get here." "I haven't read this book in I don't know something like what? Thirteen twenty-three thirty-three. Twenty years? That can't be. No that's right. Twenty years." "Look at his shoes. Look how beat-up they are. Imagine dying in old shoes like that." The dead boy's mother kept dropping glasses but the men in the bar that early in the day were immune to the shock of noise. One two three glasses in two hours. She made a pot of coffee and dumped it out five minutes later thinking it was old. She lighted a cigarette and placed it in an ashtray and a few minutes later after re-supplying the men she lighted a second cigarette at the other end of the bar.

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目录:

[The Florida Review_ 下载链接1](#)

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评论

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